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EDITORIAL.

THE press announce the auspicious starting of Andrée on July 11. The result of this first experiment in Arctic aerial navigation will be awaited with unusual interest. If Andrée shall succeed in floating at a suitable elevation for even a week and shall make good his return, he can scarcely fail to bring back data of vital importance. It is of trivial consequence whether he passes near the pole or not, and his geographical discoveries are uncertain, for his course may not take him over new territory, but he will determine the course pursued by the body of air in which he floats if he is able to keep his location, of which there is little ground for question. The course pursued by a given body of air in a region which bears such critical relations to the whole system of atmospheric circulation is a matter of radical importance. Observers at fixed points upon the earth can only determine the transient local direction of passing bodies of air. They cannot directly demonstrate the actual circulation. They can only infer it from a combination of local observations. But the actual circulation can be determined by means of the balloon floating with the body of air, subject, of course, to certain obvious qualifications, particularly those that relate to vertical movements. Andrée's trip should therefore bring forth data of vital consequence to all hypotheses relating to polar atmospheric circulation. Among these hypotheses is one suggested by the ice drift which the writer has never seen in print, and which pointedly illustrates the possible value of Andrée's experiment.

It is now well known that the free ice off the Siberian coast drifts westward until it impinges upon the east coast of Greenland, when it is diverted to the south, but on reaching Cape

Farewell it rounds to the westward and even northward, until it is again arrested by Baffin Land and the American mainland, and forced southward. The marvelous trip of Nansen has given this a heroic demonstration not likely to be questioned. It is also known that the ice fields north of Greenland and Grinnell Land press hard against the coast, and crowd through the straits between these lands in a southwesterly direction. It is also known that the ice presses hard on the north side of the Parry Islands and pushes southward and eastward, effectually blocking all the straits between them as well as Jones Sound on the east. It is also known that Banks strait and McClintock channel, trending from the northwest to the southeast, are effectually blocked by the persistent jam of the ice crowding in *from the northwest*. It is the strong and unrelenting jam of ice into this channel that has rendered all attempts at the northwest passage abortive. Correlating these movements, it appears that there is a common drift towards some point not far distant from the magnetic pole.

Now it is well recognized that this ice drift is essentially controlled by the winds. The sea currents are, to be sure, a factor, but, except as they are an expression of wind action, they seem to be relatively ineffectual. These movements have therefore suggested the hypothesis that the pole of the winds is not identical with the pole of the earth, but lies somewhere in the quarter toward which the ice drift tends to concentrate itself. This is based on the assumption that the supposed spiral course of the winds about the atmospheric pole tends to concentrate the ice at it. It is not difficult to find data in lower latitudes that fall in with this hypothesis, as, for instance, the predominant course of mid-latitude cyclones in this country and the trend of the Asiatic arid belts.

This is not the place to argue the hypothesis nor to set forth the numerous and important corollaries that spring from it. A sufficient number of significant corollaries will doubtless suggest themselves to indicate its importance, *if true*. The purpose in hand is to show how decisive the determination of the course

of any representative body of air in those regions must be on such a hypothesis and on similar hypotheses. If Andrée's balloon follows a spiral course (cyclonic gyrations aside) whose center lies in the quarter toward which the ice concentrates, the hypothesis will receive encouragement. If not, it becomes a hopeful candidate for the limbo of unsupported inferences. The reverse may be said respecting the common assumption of a strictly axial whirl, but as that rests on general probabilities it does not so well illustrate the critical value of an actual test of the movement of the air.

On quite other grounds it might equally well be affirmed that the navigation of the Arctic air by balloons will, if found practicable, have its own peculiar function which neither ship nor sledge can supply.

T. C. C.

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THE state of Missouri has recently had deep disgrace thrust upon it by the removal of the efficient director of the Geological Survey and by the appointment of men to its care and conduct who possess, according to information that we deem trustworthy, not only no competency to perform their duties, but not even a plausible semblance of competency. These appointments have apparently no other motive than the conferring of personal or political favors. No causes of complaint, we are informed, were even alleged against the previous conduct of the Survey or against the officials in charge of it. The scientific public has had ample demonstration of the vigor and energy with which the Survey has been prosecuted, the promptness with which its results have been published, and the adaptation of the work to the development of the economic as well as scientific resources of the state. It appears, therefore, that the moneys appropriated by the state of Missouri for the laudable purpose of investigating and advertising its resources and of informing its people concerning their own sources of material and intellectual wealth are being virtually diverted from the purposes specifically indicated by the statute of the state, and are being used for the personal and political interests of the

governor and his friends in the form of payment for worthless services. We are not sufficiently informed in the technicalities of law and the processes of the courts to know how legal action in a case of this kind can be instituted and maintained, but if the appointees are as obviously incompetent as information indicates, they are simply consuming the funds of the state to no purpose save their own, and we think that an effort should be made to procure a formal declaration by the courts whether this is not a virtual embezzlement, and if so, to secure the award of the proper punishment. If there is now no way of compelling a governor to respect the laws of a state and the purposes of its statutes, a way should be provided.

T. C. C.